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Obey praises cooperative effort to save jobs and the environment

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) today praised the Great Lakes Maritime community and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for negotiating an agreement that will enable important new vessel emissions standards to go forward without endangering an industry that is vital to the health and prosperity of the region.

"This is a wonderful example of what you can do when you put politics and ideology and ego aside and do what is sensible and in the best interests of everyone," Obey said.

"The initial EPA proposal, which was included in a proposed rule unveiled this summer, simply failed to understand the impact on both the economy and the environment of the Great Lakes region. It would have meant the loss of thousands of good paying jobs and vital industries to foreign companies with no improvement and, in fact, a possible deterioration in air quality. That's because it would have shifted cargo to more polluting modes of transportation such as trucks and rail, it would have raised the cost of doing business for the steel industry and others shifting even more manufacturing to China and it would have shifted demand for products like coal and limestone to other regions.

"After hearing from the maritime community, a bipartisan group of members of Congress, including Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and myself, agreed to help explain to EPA the unintended consequences and to bring the two sides together to negotiate a way forward that would preserve jobs while reducing toxic emissions.

"That's what we did and I am pleased that we were able to bring the parties together. Whenever someone is trying to promote environmental cleanup, we have heard people say it will cost jobs. That was not true when those charges were being made in the 1970s over the Clean Water Act, and it is not true today. This agreement shows that we can move forward to promote jobs and economic growth at the same time that we are cleaning up out environment."

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